

A border agent told me in Laredo recently that agents are told by supervisors at our legal ports of entry, quote, We are a port of entry, not a port of denial. So when in doubt, let people in, don't keep them out.

What an absurd policy for security, but a great greeter policy. Our Border Patrol agents should not be Wal-Mart greeters. They are law enforcement officers. They need American policy that is very clear. Keep the drug smugglers, the human smugglers and the terrorists out of America. Protect the sovereignty of our Nation.

After all, it is illegal to come to America without permission. It makes no difference what the Sly Fox of Mexico or his replacement, Commander Calderon, think. It is still our country. Unless we are serious about border security and have firm, well-defined laws on border security, we may as well replace the badge our Border Patrol agents wear with a smiley face of a Wal-Mart greeter.

And that's just the way it is.

REPUBLICANS FENCING OUT ORDINARY AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans are so concerned about their own hides that today they voted to fence off the U.S. Constitution from the American people. There is nothing to do with borders between the U.S. and Mexico or between the U.S. and Canada. It has everything to do with the Republican Party fencing out ordinary Americans from participating in their own government.

Why let everyone vote when they might actually vote for the Democrat or for the independent? Democracy is messy for the Republican Party these days, so they are going to short-circuit the process. Who needs to stay up late to watch the vote returns or worry about exit polls, when Republicans have come up with a plan to deny 7 million ordinary Americans the right to vote?

Of course, they have targeted people they don't think will vote Republican: the disadvantaged, the disabled, the elderly, Native Americans, among others. Republicans like to say they are spreading democracy around the world. Here at home, they are using this bill to disenfranchise American people.

Republicans have created a nonexistent crisis because their right-wing base is unhappy and in need of attention. Today the Republicans moved to solve a crisis they created. They want everyone to have an official government-issued photo ID before they could vote.

So much for that Republican line about getting the Federal Government out of our lives. The Republicans want the Federal Government in your face,

snapping pictures. Before you could vote, you would have to produce an official government-issued photo ID. A passport would work. You know, that is the kind of document that the rich have, because they take vacations in other countries. The poor don't take vacations at all. No passport, no vote. No problem for Republicans.

Of course, the Republicans will rush to the podium over here to say that you can use your driver's license. They will not tell you that the National Commission on Federal Election Reform in 2001 estimated that up to 10 percent of Americans eligible to vote do not have official State photo ID, like a driver's license; no photo ID, no vote, no problem for Republicans.

Now, in Georgia and Missouri, they tried this. It was thrown out in court. So today we do it at the national level. We are going to do it for everybody. They will be delighted if ordinary Americans stay home on election day. In fact, they would be relieved.

They know that this bill will encourage it. That is why Republicans are behind it 150 percent. It is the latest step in the Republican strategy to hold on to power in the election of 2006, even if they have to dismantle the democracy to do it. They passed the Help America Vote Act, and then amended it to become the Help Republicans Stay in Power Act by underfunding the legislation.

They said they were helping, but they put no money out there. It is reminiscent of Florida in 2000. Republicans are building a border fence inside our borders to keep the American people out of participating in their own government. This bill will prevent millions of people from casting a ballot, exactly what the Republicans want.

Republicans want to replace the fundamental right in America, the government of the people, by the people and for the people with something else: government of the few, by the privileged and for the rich. This is the creed of the Republican 1 percent Party.

The President of the League of Women Voters, Mary Wilson said, "This is an attempt to politicize the voting process by erecting barriers to keep many eligible legal voters from participating. Congress should not be playing politics with our right to vote," closed quote.

Yet the Republicans are hijacking the right to vote of an ordinary Americans. Why? Because they are afraid of losing power and afraid they can't scare the American people into submission any longer. Letting every eligible American vote means the American people might actually choose the person they want.

That is something Republicans find truly frightening, so they are building a fence to keep the Americans out of America. But the fence won't go up in this bill till 2008, so the American people have a mid-term election ahead. You know what they are up to. You know what they want to do.

But you have a chance to vote, still, everybody has a chance to vote, and the people can vote and protect their right to vote by voting against people who will put up this kind of legislation. We saw in 2000 the efforts to keep people away in indirect ways. This is a direct shot at Americans' right to vote.

□ 1900

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN RECOGNITION OF OPERATION HOMETOWN GRATITUDE

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from North Carolina.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, Harry Truman once said, "America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."

I rise today in recognition of Operation Hometown Gratitude. Operation Hometown Gratitude is an effort started by students from Rochester, Minnesota, Public Schools to recognize the hard work and sacrifice of our Armed Forces. The operation was formed to thank our troops by sending care packages and supplies.

I would like to recognize all of the students for their dedication. I am especially thankful to student organizers Katie White, Kelcey Evers, Brian Ehni, Corey Hinsch, Dayton Root, Greg Tri, Mitch Haack, Lucas Kirkam, Jon Nelson, Paul Keehn and Jayna Rench. As someone who has witnessed firsthand the gratitude of our Armed Forces when they receive these care packages and letters of encouragement, I can assure each of these young people that their work is important.

The energy and enthusiasm of these young people was harnessed by a great American. Gary Komaniecki is a teacher at both Rochester John Marshall and Mayo High Schools. Gary is the advisor for these young people and should be recognized for his continued support for our men and women in uniform. Gary has received assistance from Judy Evers, Brenda White, Deanna Mandler, Arthur and Shirley Scammell and Maggie Hovel.

I would also like to recognize the sponsors of this program: VFW Post 1215; all three Rochester HyVee locations; Terry Timm of Ye Olde Butcher Shop; Dave Evans from The Printers; Darel Nigon from Nigon Woodworks; Shawn Flippin from National Pawn Company; Rochester Culvers, both north and south; Jim Rush from A-Z Embroidery; and Homestyle Pizza.